



**Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Texas**

Donald J. DeGabrielle, Jr. • United States Attorney

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JOHN YEMBRICK
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(713) 567-9388

FORMER EDCOUCH ELSA ISD TRUSTEE PLEADS GUILTY TO BRIBERY SCHEME

McALLEN, TX – Aaron Gonzalez, 42, a former Edcouch Elsa Independent School District (EE-ISD) trustee, was convicted of extortion, United States Attorney Donald J. DeGabrielle, Jr. announced today. At a hearing before United States District Judge Ricardo Hinojosa, Gonzalez pleaded guilty to the federal felony offense and is scheduled to be sentenced on September 1, 2006. At sentencing, Gonzalez faces a maximum punishment of twenty (20) years in federal prison, without parole, and a \$250,000 fine. The court permitted Gonzalez to remain free on bond pending his sentencing hearing.

Gonzalez was indicted along with Daniel Rodriguez, 37, a McAllen-area architectural firm employee, on October 25, 2005, and accused of accepting things of value from McAllen-area architectural firm employee Daniel Rodriguez, 37, and another, now-deceased, McAllen contractor, in exchange for favorable, official votes and influence regarding EE-ISD contracts related to the design and construction of schools. EE-ISD, a government entity that receives substantial federal funds, is located in Hidalgo County, Texas.

Today, Gonzalez pleaded guilty to extortion involving a \$1,500 cash payment he accepted from an individual interested in bidding for a contract for furniture to be used in a new building then being built by EE-ISD. In turn, Gonzalez promised to use the official powers of his elected office in assisting this individual in the bid for an EE-ISD contract.

The indictment remains pending against co-defendant Daniel Rodriguez. Rodriguez is set for jury selection on August 8, 2006, and is **presumed innocent unless convicted through due process of law.**

The case was investigated by agents with the McAllen Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Larry Eastepp of the Public Corruption Section of the United States Attorney's Office.

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